

GREEN MASK

presents



CREATIVE WRITING AWARDS

1959

Port Huron Junior College

Port Huron, Michigan

The Green Mask Dramatics Society of the Port Huron Junior College presents the awards winners in the first Creative Writing Contest. We congratulate them on their evidence of careful workmanship in shaping language to mature and sensitive thought. Selection and organization of materials have achieved unity and clarity of purpose; diction, dialogue, and imagery, by their vividness and compactness, have forwarded the action or achieved a life-like and convincing quality for the whole.

We take pleasure in announcing the following awards:

Poetry

First Place and Prize...."One Hamburger, No Mustard".....
Allan Steele

First Honorable Mention..."Catch Me".....Allan Steele

Second Honorable Mention...."I Heard You Breathe..Then Silence"
John Pardee

Short Story

First Place and Prize..."The Outcast".....Keith Laducer

First Honorable Mention..."The Wages of Sin"..Shaun Shambleau

Second Honorable Mention..."Decision".....Shaun Shambleau

Since limitation of space precludes our publishing all of the winning contributions, we are presenting the first place winners in the short story and poetry.

We wish to thank all of those who participated in the contest and to assure them that there were many instances of real merit, certainly enough to warrant further efforts in the field of writing.

We salute all of you!

The Green Mask Dramatics Society
Sponsors and Judges
Blanche Redman
Alton Reeves
Margaret Wedge

One Hamburger, No Mustard

by A. Mann

Even in Detroit,
Even on the road smelly
With exhausts and vibrating
All passing eardrums rudely,
Even against whirs and clinks
Mad with fury, determined to DO
---something (we fail to understand
Just, what, and my language like my
Senses, has begun to fail me)____
A young woman walks about,
Delicately suspended and touchingly
Hidden in Dacron from the suspicious
Chemists' laboratory. At the hamburger
Joint refugees from industry and television
Stand looking over the counter, a voice
Warm and delicately like her breasts and
The gentle movement of her hips and
The firm smooth strength of her legs
Made me wish the damned radio was off.
Some insincere slob was trying to say
That we should run down to somethings'
Television appliance store to invest
In further death, because, he said, it
Is the cheapest on the market, and
A real bargain.

Then
Life (she had black hair, and she wore
Blue shorts) walked over to the radio
And turned it off, and asked me
What would I like? All I said was
One hamburger, no mustard.

The
Refugees had strained faces framed
In duck tail crew cuts, they drove cars
But still the dank loneliness festered
In their eyes, and when one lanky young one
Just out for a drive sat down, he smirked
A gentle apology to say to her he too
Thought the whole long highway,
The whole long factory,
The whole long upsetting day____ was silly.

Jess Caudhill

The Outcast

Ray had often thought about telling the gang his reason for requesting a transfer to a combat outfit but he knew they would think he was crazy. The feeling of contempt he had for himself was too deep for an outsider to appreciate unless he too had passed through a similar experience. The events that led up to his act of cowardice were still all too vivid, and many a night since they had caused him much troubled thought. He had but to close his eyes at night and he could hear the terrified screams of Fred Riley as the current bore him and the unconscious Nick Jenson nearer to the boiling water of the falls.

The three of them had been thrashing all day. Ray was the oldest of the three and was the most inclined to do a hard day's work. The Wisconsin sun had set by the time they had finished supper, but it was still hot. They decided that a nice cool dip in the Sunangahala would feel mighty fine. The three of them, as Ray recalled, had filled the old man's pickup to capacity. Fred was a six footer and weighed one hundred and eighty pounds, which was pretty fair sized for any seventeen-year-old, but Nick, the same age, made the dime store scales groan with his two hundred forty-five pounds. Nick wasn't fat; he was just a big romping, stomping farm boy. Ray even remembered how Fred had cussed

(2)

when he saw that the mixed multitude that was gathered at the river would necessitate the wearing of bathing suits.

Ray was a little bushed and preferred to just soak in the shallow water near the shore. The two taller boys could nearly wade out to the second sand bar but there was a spot where they would have to swim. They had disappeared into the darkness only a few moments when Ray heard that terrible cry for help. He knew it was Fred calling, but his voice was so filled with urgency and fear that it sounded strange. Ray's heart pounded with fear. He buried his face in the sleeping bay in an unconscious agonized effort to shut out that plea for help. A thousand times since that fateful evening he had asked himself why he didn't go to the aid of those boys he had grown up with? He was a strong swimmer and had never before considered himself a coward, but then he had never been in such a trying circumstance.

Fred's cries became weaker as his strength diminished in his superhuman effort to keep Nick's big head above water. Someone flashed a spotlight on the two boys, who were still within easy swimming distance for Ray. He smashed his fist into the wooden framework of his bunk and hissed savagely, why didn't I go out after those guys? Two strangers had swum out, clothes and all, and brought Nick in, as Ray just stood by watching helplessly, his temples throbbing with each heartbeat and his stomach tied in knots. To Ray it seemed as if the ordeal had lasted for an eternity, but actually it was all over within a few minutes.

But even then it was too late. In that short distance between the two sand bars Nick had gotten a cramp and gone down. The Doctor worked with the emergency life-saving apparatus, but it was no use; Nick was dead.

Ray had called on Nick's family the next day to tell them how it happened. The first thing they asked was, "What were you doing while our boy was drowning?" What could he tell them? The burning hate and contempt that he saw in old man Jenson's eyes made him despise himself even more. All the villagers felt the same way. Even the little kids ridiculed him. All this Ray could have withstood if the one person whose opinion of him really mattered had been understanding. He asked Lenora London to marry him after the drowning incident had simmered down a little. Her reply cut like a knife, "No, Ray, I want a man who I can respect." He hadn't seen her since.

Ray stayed close to the farm until he was drafted. Folks in a small town were slow to forget things. It was much easier to be lonesome than to associate with people who were hostile toward you.

At the outbreak of the Korean War, Ray would have enlisted right away, but his father suffered a severe heart attack, so Ray stayed home and nursed fifteen head of dairy cattle. The next year he was drafted. If he could get into combat, he knew he could prove to himself, at least, that he wasn't a coward.

The men in his platoon, eager to seize any opportunity as an excuse to celebrate, threw a little beer party for him. Ray didn't

(4)

feel much like celebrating, but he appreciated the gesture.

He didn't sleep much that night and he was glad to see the morning come. He finished packing before the C. Q. woke the troops. He picked up his transfer papers after chow and was driven by some guy with a Brooklyn accent, to the dock. After the usual wait that accompanies most military movements, he and four other transferees boarded the little ferry that shifts small numbers of troops between Koje and the mainland. The sun felt good as Ray squatted on the deck. A tall Pfc. thought it would be nice to lie on the deck with his shirt off until very young 2nd. John told him in no uncertain terms that this wasn't a pleasure cruise.

Koje was fast fading in the distance, but the winding roads and hillside villages were still visible. Smoke from the numerous charcoal pits spiraled nearly straight up, behind and above headquarters company. Koje, like most of the little islands that dotted this part of the yellow sea, was picturesque. On nearly every island there was a village, small, primitive and strangely alluring. Ray toyed with the idea of coming back here some day and spending a year or two on one of these ancient villages. This was one part of Korea that was untouched by the war and modernization. It could be entirely possible that some of these little settlements had never seen a white man up close. The straw-thatched houses were L shaped and invariably had a spacious courtyard where the numerous children played and the women pounded the wheat and millet into flour. Some farming was done, but there were more nets and boats than there were agricultural implements.

(5)

The islands were getting farther apart now and the sea was rolling gently as the little ferry chugged into open water. The rolling motion of the sea had rocked Ray to sleep. It was three o'clock when the young 2nd. John told them to prepare to debark. Debark, what a drag, Ray thought, they were just barely able to see the land. It would be an hour yet before they got into Pusan. He watched some Korean fishing boats go by. Those things didn't even look safe enough to take out on the Sunangahala back home and here were these Koreans taking them out to sea.

A truck from the 45th Division's Replacement Depot was waiting to take the transferees to the depot for more processing. Ray nearly laughed out loud when the Lieutenant's duffle bag slipped from his grasp and fell into the greasy water. A quick thinking Korean fortunately retrieved it before it sank.

The Replacement Depot was, as usual, a confused outfit. Nearly every tent was filled to capacity. Some men were rotating back to the states and others had just arrived from the U. S. the day before. Their well-worn fatigues and the taut lines in their faces gave the combat vets the appearance of men who had seen and done much, most of it unpleasant.

After chow the next morning the mess sergeant shoved a box of C rations at each man going to the 279th Regiment, and they then proceeded to the train station. Ray was amazed at the rapidity with which they got underway. The train crawled through what might have been the slum district of Pusan. The city had been flooded by refugees who had fled south in front of the advancing Reds.

Hundreds of thousands were living in cardboard shacks in areas infested with vermin and refuse in a tangled mess that defied description. Ray wished that there were something he could do to alleviate their plight.

It was a relief to get out of the city with its vast hordes of suffering humanity. As they jolted and swayed through the rural areas, he noticed that every square foot of ground that would grow anything at all was utilized. With a farmer's appreciation of toil, Ray marveled at the ability of these people to grow such fine crops in this poor sandy soil.

The train jerked to a halt in the agricultural district of Taegu. Even before the train came to a halt, the Kujee boys descended upon them trying desperately to sell all kinds of pins, pens, watches and cameras, which no doubt had been stolen from some careless G.I. The older and stronger boys looked healthy enough, but the smaller ones had open sores on their heads, sunken eyes and the protruding stomach, characteristic of the human undernourished body. These were the ones who really suffered from the war.

Some Korean civilians boarded the train, and in a few minutes they were rolling again. The Casanovas on board were beginning to lament the absence of feminine companionship and were keeping a sharp lookout for any creature who might be a representative of that sex, regardless of physical attributes. A girl in her late teens was walking down the road that ran parallel to the tracks. Ray noticed that her hair was braided into one large pigtail,

advertizing the fact that she was of marriageable age and still retained her virginity. She was far from being pretty, but the wolves on the train passed many choice comments proclaiming their intentions. The girl turned her head the other way. She probably didn't understand English, but a woman doesn't have to be able to understand the language to comprehend the G.I.'s amorous intentions. Ray thought if anyone spoke to their sisters back home like that, they would be ready to kill the offender. Funny, how a G.I. thinks he can do what he pleases in another man's country.

The terrain was getting more mountainous. What few trees there were had greater height and thickness than the trees in the more southerly part of the peninsula. Sandy pock-like shell craters dotted the otherwise green hillsides. A burned half-track lay dejectedly on its side, bearing mute testimony, along with other destroyed or discarded army equipment, that across this tiny country a terrific battle had see-sawed.

The small locomotive chugged and labored heavily as it climbed. Ray stuck his head out the window and saw the wide black mouth of a tunnel waiting to swallow the train. The day was warm, and the heat from the engine made the tunnel even hotter. All the windows, due to inexperience in Korean train travel, had been left open, and the smoke from the engine literally billowed into the cars. The locomotive started to labor harder and lose speed. The fumes were really getting serious. There seemed to be a touch of panic in the excited voices of the troops. Ray thought, if they stam-pede in an effort to get out, someone will surely get stomped to death in this smoke-filled blackness. His lungs were begging for oxygen as the first faint rays of daylight penetrated the darkness.

(3)

As the train lumbered out into the bright sunlight, all the G.I.'s who could get to a window were sucking in great mouthfuls of air like so many fish out of water. The Korean engineer grinned broadly at the discomfort of the passengers.

The 279th Regiment had just been replaced by the 180th of the same division on Sandbag Castle. Ray reported to a very unmilitary looking medical officer, who assigned him to King Company in the 3rd Battalion. Martinez, King Company's senior aid man, showed Ray around the company area and introduced him to the men of the 1st platoon. Guy Strong, the other 1st platoon medic, was a likable nineteen-year-old R.A. who was continually complaining about army life.

Training problems, minor injuries, and the usual numerous rumors filled the next few weeks. Funny thing about rumors, in most of them there is a little truth. The fourth week after Ray arrived, a party made up of platoon sergeants and squad leaders was spirited away for twenty-four hours. This was it; everyone knew that they were the advance party whose task it was to guide and place the platoons in their proper positions. The arrival of the advance party in the company area was followed shortly by a convoy of trucks; King Company was on its way to Heartbreak Ridge.

Chief Bonoli's dark Indian eyes flashed in anticipation of the soon-coming action. Ray guessed the chief to be as blood-thirsty as his ancestors were. The first hour the troops were laughing and horsing around; then, as the thunder of the heavy artillery became louder, they became more sober. Mike Mara, the

big platoon sergeant, leaned toward Ray. "You scared?"

"Yeah, a little I guess. Why, does it show?"

"Don't let it worry ya, we're all shook."

"What about Bonoli, you think he's scared?" They both looked at the Indian. His helmet was pulled down over his eyes and he appeared to be sleeping.

"He ain't sleepin'." Mike said. "I bet his guts are all tensed up like ours are."

The trucks climbed steadily and the drivers were intermittently feeding them lower gears as the recently widened ox-cart road became steeper. At a bend in the road they came to a heavy artillery outfit. A Long Tom stretched black and shiny towards the hills to the north.

The sun had set, but the twilight lingered on as the trucks finally halted. A row of hills separated a heavy mortar section from the main line of resistance. The flashes from their muzzles lit the sky like heat lightning. Darkness had fallen by the time King Company started to climb the tortuous path that led to the area which they were to occupy. The 180th, whom Ray's outfit was relieving, descended past them. The usual chatter and insults of two rival outfits were lacking; these boys were beat. Ray thought it must have been a long-legged jigger who cut the steps into the hillside; he could hardly reach from one step to another. Captain Hurst, the company commander, climbed past them, urging them to move faster. Ray thought, if the old man was carrying a pack he wouldn't be so interested in speed. Somebody cussed as his helmet

fell off and went bounding down the hillside. It sounded like sergeant Klatt.

They arrived at the area designated after an hour of steady climbing. The sand bag bunkers were in pretty good shape and the trenches were deep and wide. Guards were posted at the outposts, and firing positions and the 1st platoon settled down for the night. Everything was quiet. The stillness was shattered only by the irregular harassing chatter from one of the quad fifties that was mounted on a hill behind the main line of resistance.

A red sun arose bright and hot the next day. Mike and the platoon leader, Lieutenant Daly, estimated the nearest Chinese position to be eight hundred yards away. The Chinks occupied one range of hills and King Company held the opposite with a valley in between. To the left and way below the first platoon on the reverse side of the hill, a small stream wound its way between the boulders. Ray went down with the water detail to see what it was like. The water was delicious and as cold as Lake Superior.

By noon the kitchen had gotten organized and sent hot chow up via insulated containers and the strong back of the Korean papasans. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon two F 80 jets came in for an air strike. They roared down on the Chinks strafing with their fifty calibers as they descended, then dropped napalm on the Chinese fortifications. The Chinks must have dug right into the mountainside. After each strike a volley of small arms and machine gun fire could be heard. The artillery pounded the Chinks for

awhile after the jets left; then all was quiet.

Early in the morning Ray was awakened by Mike. "The outpost spotted at least eight Chinks coming up our water trail. Better come along, we might need you."

"Should I take a litter?"

"No, it'll just be in the way." Mike said as they joined the rest of the reception party. Ray was glad it was dark; no one could see him tremble. Probably the rest were glad it was dark too. Lieutenant Daly, Mike, the four squad, and Ray slid down the trail. He was glad he hadn't brought the litter. A rock formation provided good cover. Chief Bonoli crouched beside Ray. Even he seemed tense, perhaps afraid.

For ten minutes the moon hid behind a cloud, and not a sound was heard. The moon for a fleeting moment was unmasked and Ray felt Bonoli stiffen. "Mike, in two minutes they'll be within range." The Indian's whisper was just barely audible. Mike nodded; he had seen them too.

Ray couldn't see them, but he thought he heard them coming closer. Lieutenant Daly brought his carbine to his shoulder slowly, then straightened up in a flash, and the fight was on. The rest of the party swung into action simultaneously. The Chinks were just as quick to respond. Slugs from their burp guns ricocheted off the rock formation and buzzed angrily through the night. Klatt, like the gung-ho idiot he was, leaped on top of a boulder and was firing from the hip like John Wayne. The firefight lasted only as long as it takes to feed two banana clips of ammo. through a

M2 carbine. Mike lobbed two grenades downhill in the direction of the retreating Chinks; then all was quiet again. Klatt received the only injury, and that was minor. Ray patched him up while they waited to see if the Chinks would return to retrieve their dead. Lieutenant Daly decided that they might as well return to the bunkers and come back in the morning and see how many Chinks had rotated.

Ray awoke an hour or so after the sun had risen and went outside. Mike was already on his way to the scene of last night's action. Six Chinks were stretched out to the left of the path. Their skin took on a pale, almost greenish cast, due to the great loss of blood caused by the multiple holes made by the carbines. One had fallen on his back with his arms and legs stretched out, spread-eagle fashion. Mike nudged him with his foot -- he was stiff as a board. The almond-shaped eyes were staringly fixed on the sky. Already the bugs and flies were enjoying their task of decomposition. Ray became very nauseated as he watched a big blue-tailed blow-fly crawl into the half-opened mouth and disappear. Mike mumbled something about a burial detail and the two of them retraced their steps up the trail.

The days slipped by unnoticed. Ray all but lost track of time. He knew it was the last part of June or early July. During the day most of the men slept, but at night the fireworks resumed. Fear had become an old thing with Ray. It no longer made him tremble, but it still tied his stomach in knots. Death had become almost commonplace. There were many new faces in the first platoon.

Klatt's first squad held the position nearest the Chinks, but as long as the men stayed in the trenches, they were out of sight. As the days dragged by, Klatt became overconfident, till one day he was distributing some K-rations to his men without first taking the precaution of making sure the men had their flak jackets on. Klatt's white T-shirt was plainly visible from the Chinks' hill. Ray heard the first incoming round and learned later that it had landed very near the group of unprotected men, killing two and injuring seriously six more. The Chinks had the range, and their eighty-ones were walking all over the first squad area.

Armstrong, a replacement who had arrived only two days before, managed to get to the phone and hysterically told Mike what had happened. Ray took off with his aid kit in the direction of the first squad. Strong, the other medic, stayed behind to call company headquarters to get them to send more litters.

A barrage of eighty-ones came in, and Ray flattened himself against the walls of the trench. The Chinks had mounted a fifty-one caliber in a high position which overlooked most of the first squad area. Bonoli was trying to crawl out of the trench and get to the wounded men. Every time he stuck his head up, the Chinks would let go a burst. Mike skidded to a halt behind Ray. "Looks bad kid." Ray said nothing. He breathed a silent prayer and leaped out of the trench. The machine-gun rattled off a long burst, kicking up debris all around him, but he made it to where the wounded were. A large boulder shielded them from the fifty-one, but the mortars were still coming in hot and heavy.

(14)

Henderson, a big, gangling, good-natured Negro, had been hit bad. An artery in his leg had been severed, and the blood spurted out like a bright red fountain. Ray put a tourniquet on the leg and started to drag him to the nearest trench. It was only about fifteen feet away, but a lot could happen in that short distance. Ray knew that if the lives of these men were to be saved they would have to be evacuated immediately. He got Henderson near the trench, and Mike and Bonoli lowered him down. He followed this process with the next two men without getting hurt, though the Chinks were coming very close. Ray reached the trench with the fourth man when a big slug from the machine gun knocked his legs out from under him. He leaped and half fell in the direction of the boulder. His right leg was torn up more than a little bit, but he could still move it. He waited until the painful throbbing subsided a little, then again started the evacuation process. Another heavy barrage of eighty-ones pinned him down. After the debris cleared, he managed to move the rest of the men. The medics from headquarters company were patching up the wounded. Strong had already gone down to the battalion aid-station with some of the first guys that got hit. Ray plunged into the trench and started to dress the wounds of Sergeant Klatt, who was responsible for this whole mess. He was still conscious but stared blankly at the sky. Ray started to place a pressure bandage over the large jagged hole in Klatt's leg when a round exploded above the trench. Ray was knocked down and covered with dirt and rock particles. Something wet was running down the side of his face. "Ray, you hurt bad?" Mike's voice sounded far away.

"No sweat, I'm okay; get these guys out of here." He shook his head in an effort to clear his vision. He finished dressing Klatt's wounds, which were now covered with sand, and made his way to where Mike was. A part of the trench made a sharp curve between two boulders, and the litters, in order to negotiate the curve, would have to be raised at least as high as a man's head. Bonoli had taken a piece of shrapnel in his shoulder and was unable to raise his arm that high. The medics from headquarters company weren't strong enough, so Ray and Mike relayed each litter around the curve. Once around the curve, they were fairly safe. The machine gun slugs had ricocheted off the boulder many times, but so far had missed the wounded men on the litters. Henderson was the last one. Ray didn't think he could raise his end of the litter with the big Negro on it. He raised it as high as his shoulders, then thrust with his arms and legs as hard as he was able and managed to get it high enough to round the curve. The machine gun chattered again. They heard a slug splat into something soft. They rounded the curve and set the litter down. There wasn't any need to hurry Henderson's evacuation. A slug had cut a two inch groove in his head.

The blood from Ray's head wound flowed freely as he knelt to finish the bandaging. It was hard to get into a kneeling position; his leg was getting stiffer by the minute. He had just given an injection of morphine to Klatt when a peculiar dizziness passed over him. He tried to fight it off, but the men, the hill,

and the sky started to spin faster and faster, then darkness, sweet complete darkness.

Somebody was fooling around with his leg. He heard some voices. A sharp pain shot across his forehead as he tried to lift himself. He opened his eyes and squinted at a small light bulb dangling from the ceiling till his vision cleared. "Hey man, you slept thirty-six hours! Wake up, hey."

It was dear old blood-thirsty Bonoli. "Hi chief, am I bad hurt?"

"You're at 46 M.A.S.H. And they got female nurses here. They say that you're not going to die right away."

"You're worse than a marine when it comes to glory grabbin, but there's about five guys that owe their lives to you." Ray winced as Mike's big paw slapped him on the shoulder.

"King Company is proud of what you did. I'm putting you in for the Silver Star." Ray raised his eyes a little higher and saw Captain Hurst grinning like a 'possum eating rotten eggs.

Mike slapped him on the shoulder again. "The Captain has written a blow-by-blow account of the whole damn mess. The newspaper in your home town probably will make a big thing out of it." The Silver Star! Ray leaned slowly back into the pillow and smiled at the thought. If this would change the way folks felt about him back home, he didn't know; he didn't care. At last he had settled things in his own mind. For the first time in a very long time he felt satisfied with himself. The mud of despair and contempt had cleared, and a new wonderful feeling of inner peace reigned supremely within.

